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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Syria Iraq - Bush Presidency
Germany - Political Crisis
PARIS - Wednesday, November 02, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Syria
Iraq - Bush Presidency
Germany - Political Crisis

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Suburban violence and the government's internal tension between PM Villepin and Interior Minister Sarkozy about the means to deal with delinquents is today's major front-page story. But Germany's political stalemate is the lead story for Le Figaro: "Germany Sinks Deeper Into a Political Crisis." The editorial emphasizes the risks for Germany's economy, but also beyond for Europe. (See Part C)

The suicide attack committed by a ten year old in Iraq serves as background in France Soir for an article devoted to the children of the world "who are the first 'collateral' victims of conflicts" from Burma to Congo to Iraq. "If these types of attacks were to become the standard in Iraq, they would signal a new radicalization in the rebellion's strategy." Le Figaro in its report contends that "Iraq is dependent on the GIS for its democratization." (See Part C)

The stance adopted at the UNSC on Syria elicits two commentaries which emphasize France's lead on this issue and Franco-American cooperation. (See Part C)

Concerns about an avian flu epidemic, how to prepare for it and President Bush's NIH speech on America's preparedness to deal with the threat are a major story. While Le Figaro carries an op-ed by former Socialist Minister Bernard Kouchner calling on the need for a "global approach rather than a national one, and the need to create a special worldwide fund to be managed through the WHO," Liberation titles its report: "President Bush's Lessons in Prevention at a Cost of 7 Billion." Liberation also interviews Jean-Marie Le Guen, a medical doctor and National Assembly Representative: "The U.S. is well-prepared in that it has a high level of scientific know-how. What is striking is the good dissemination of information at all levels. On the down side there is the administration's tardiness in preparing for such an epidemic and the lack of a national health system. If a pandemic breaks out, vaccination will not be the answer. The answer will depend on the preparedness of society to deal with it."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Syria

"Tact With Syria"

Jean-Christophe Ploquin in Catholic La Croix (11/02): "Who wants Syria to break down? Apparently no one. At the UNSC it was obvious that everyone was taking care not to go too far too quickly. Under the impetus of China, Russia and Algeria, the explicit threat of sanctions was avoided. Al-Assad is still considered Syria's legitimate leader and Syria has not been branded a pariah. The UNSC is looking to marry two goals which could in the end turn out to be contradictory. First, to destroy Syria's capabilities to do harm, in Lebanon but also in Iraq. Second, to keep Syria from falling into chaos: no one wants a second Iraq. This strategy is essentially the work of France, whose interest in Lebanon is primordial, and who seems to have elicited the understanding of Secretary Rice. For the past year, Paris has with a certain degree of success taken the leadership in the West's policy on Lebanon, with a forceful resolution which has also managed to avoid extremism."

"Asking Syria To Turn Itself In"

Gerard Dupuy in left-of-center Liberation (11/01): "The summons was unanimous but polite. The Bush-Blair-Chirac trio accepted to trim down the UN draft resolution so that it could be adopted. Threats against Syria have gone from explicit to implicit. And Assad has earned himself a reprieve. But if a

stalemate develops, the case of Syria will go back to the UNSC. The Franco-American mano en la mano is developing as an antithesis of past tensions over Iraq. If this cooperation continues, it will open up vistas which seemed previously obstructed."

Iraq - Bush Presidency

"Iraq Dependent on GIs for Democratization"

Adrien Jaulmes in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/02):

"Guerrilla attacks continue to spill bloodshed in Iraq. Meanwhile the democratic process continues: these are two strategies which are in direct conflict one with the other. On the one hand the Americans and the local government want to stick to the political process calendar no matter what. On the other, insurgents are determined to create chaos. In order to save the political process, the Americans continue to pressure the guerrilla fighters but without success. While some isolated victories have been registered, the American strategy has not managed to durably disarm the guerrilla factions. The American Army has somewhat managed to contain the guerrilla warfare. But we are not far from a vicious circle where the real successes of the democratic process remain tied to a foreign military presence."

"A Stainless Steel Presidency?"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/01): "Much conjecture is going on about the consequences of the Lewis Libby affair on President Bush. It is undeniable that this legal reversal is one more embarrassing incident in a long list which includes Katrina and the nomination of Harriet Miers. If facts alone served to qualify an administration, the Bush administration would indeed be in trouble. But President Bush seems only tangentially concerned. It is as if the President were impermeable to these facts. Presidencies which take their stock in ideology are impervious to reality, which counts for very little in their scheme of things. Is George Bush a stainless steel President? The Libby trial will put his presidency to the test."

Germany - Political Crisis

"Germany at a Standstill"

Philippe Reclus in right-of-center Le Figaro (11/02): "Many ingredients are mixing in to undermine the plan for a coalition government. The negotiations underway may or may not succeed in creating a new government. But there is no guarantee that the government will be in a position to give the necessary impetus. The risk of paralysis is real. Just when the Germans are calling for determination and something to boost their lost confidence. If the oil crisis slows down the world economy in general, Europe's economic engine could be affected. A Germany without a pilot and an economy at a standstill would be terrible news for all of Europe. The recent tension observed over the WTO and the CAP, the joint EU budget and the lack of a real industrial policy raises the specter of a European explosion. If the German crisis lasts the consequences may be too much to handle."

"Europe Awaiting a New Impetus from the Franco-German Engine"

Jacques Hubert-Rodier in right-of-center Les Echos (11/02):

"The limitations of the Franco-German engine have become apparent in Europe's failure to construct a political Europe. The continuity of the Franco-German couple, if it is indeed confirmed, may not be enough to give a new impetus to Europe's construction. And no one really believes in a Franco-British engine, even if Paris and London were instrumental in building Europe's defense initiative." STAPLETON